

ZENITH

DIGEST

Vol. 7 No. 5 September/October 2000

A serious and informative periodical for the transsexual community

'It sounds silly but I've nothing to wear'

The Rev Peter Stone will be the first Church of England vicar to have a sex change.

by Cassandra Jardine, London Daily Telegraph
Friday 23 June 2000

The signs that the Rev Peter Stone was embarking on a change of sex have been there for some time. First, he had his ears pierced. "As Peter, I wouldn't dream of wearing earrings," he says. "But some parishioners did notice the holes. 'You must have been a rocker,' they would say. I just let them think what they wanted to."

Then, last August, when he had a first operation and began taking female hormones, came further clues. Under his black clerical shirt, the gentle bulge of a pair of breasts is visible, and his cheeks are strangely smooth - the result of laser treatment to get rid of his beard. Looking at the photographs that hang in his study at the vicarage of St Phillip's, Upper Stratton, you can see that his face has altered, too: lean cheeks have given way to a softer, more feminine appearance; bushy eyebrows have been thinned and shaped. It is possible now to imagine how he will look by the end of the year, when he has the final operation, and becomes Carol.

"I don't know how I should be known," he says, in a soft, but clearly masculine voice. "I've always been Father Peter. I thought of becoming Petra, but I'd spend the rest of my life spelling it, because one of the things they can't change is the voice."

Petra was another thought: "But I didn't want to sound like the *Blue Peter* dog. So I settled on Carol, because it is pretty. I can't be Mother Carol. Maybe the Rev Carol would be best."

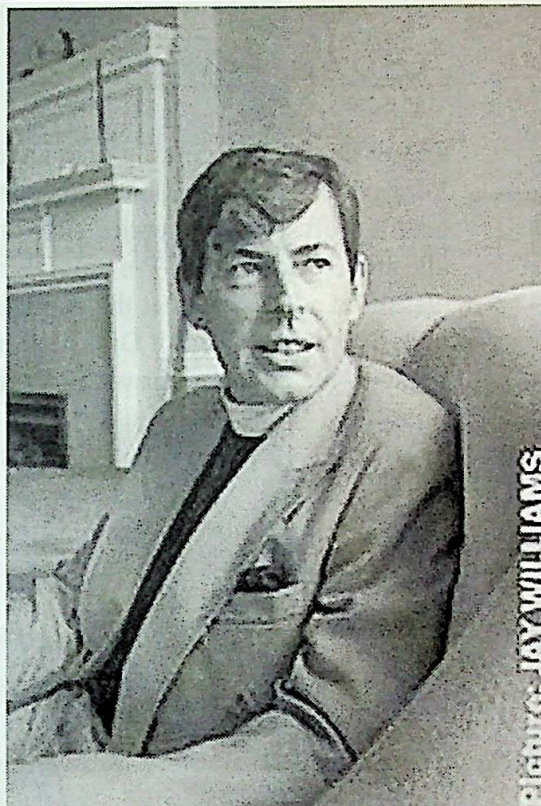
Talking like this is new and unnerving. Until last weekend, when the Bishop of Bristol, the Rt. Rev Barry Rogerson, made an announcement to Peter's 100-strong congregation at the end of morning service, the 46-year-old vicar's desire to be a woman was a secret between himself and God, one he had kept since the age of four.

While the Bishop was telling them about

Peter's plight, Peter was in the vicarage, fretting. This was the last stage in a journey that he feared would end in disaster. "In January, I wrote to the Bishop, telling him my life story, my agonies. I was terrified. I thought I would lose my home, my livelihood, my job. But I had an overwhelming feeling that I'd come to the end of the road. It was a letter that has been in my heart for the 22 years of my ministry. I've never known anything else but the call to serve God in Holy Orders and I've never known any deeper desire than to be a woman.

I risked losing the whole meaning of my existence."

He had hoped it would never come
continued on page 7



New Health Board Policy Embraces LGBT Diversity

Vancouver, BC: Aug. 4, 2000 —

The Vancouver/Richmond Health Board (V/RHB) has included a fifth group comprising lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in its recently-adopted employment equity policy contained in its Framework for Diversity report. The report, which was approved at the Board's June 22, 2000 meeting, formalizes what many of the region's healthcare organizations are already doing, or want to do more of, said V/RHB Board Member Bonnie Pearson.

continued on page 13

Marginalized Workers Find a Voice.

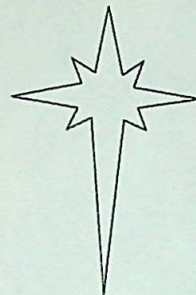
The struggle of transgendered employees is emerging as a human rights issue

Globe & Mail August 1, 2000

By Virginia Galt

Workplace harassment of transgendered employees has burst out of the closet as a human rights issue, with ground-breaking new policy commanding employers to take notice. Transgendered employees, including cross-dressers and those in physical transition from one gender to the other, make up a small "but severely marginalized" segment of the work force, says Pearl Eliadis, director of policy and education for the Ontario Human Rights Commission. *continued on page 8*

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VICTORIA CHAPTER

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ZENITH

DIGEST

Volume 7 Number 5

September/October 2000

News

England's first transsexual vicar

New policy for regional health board

Ontario Human Rights Commission supports TG workers

News briefs page 18

News Feature

SRS in Montreal page 9

Features

Photos from the AGM page 14

Celebrations and parties page 14, 19

Columns

Mailbag page 4

Cartoon by Melissa page 4

Victoria report page 5

Editorial page 5

President's notes page 6

Jenny Mars page 13

Stephanie Castle page 15

Petra Cummings page 17

MAILBAG

Dr. Ron Stevenson, Centre for Sexuality, Gender Identity and Reproductive Health Vancouver General Hospital Department of Psychiatry

Dear Dr. Stevenson:

This letter is in praise of the staff and of the excellent treatment I have received at the gender clinic. Gender dysphoria, or gender identity disorder, is a rare and difficult medical condition. While there is a fair degree of public misunderstanding about it, the etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of it is well understood. It only makes sense for a patient who suspects he or she has this problem to seek expert help. At the clinic I discovered a high degree of professionalism and understanding, and I also experienced levels of care and compassion that went well beyond the call of duty, or the job description. I always felt that I had a team of experts on my side, trying to help me through some difficult decisions and procedures.

During the diagnostic phase, the psychiatric staff took a cautious, conservative approach, never giving me a prescriptive or pre-defined judgment. Instead, they helped me reach my own conclusions and then suggested possible courses of action. At no time did I ever feel I was being pushed one way or the other.

When I decided to that gender transition was the best course of action for me, the clinic provided an outline of care that was as safe and effective as possible. The endocrine appointment was an especially positive experience. Again, the prescribed treatment was conservative, and designed to cause the best effect with the least potential harm.

During the past year I have dealt with many difficult situations regarding family and friends. I have had to deal with a number of bureaucracies and agencies. I was often pleasantly surprised with people's reaction to my situation. Having supportive documentation from the clinic was of considerable help.

I don't know what I would have done if the clinic had not existed. Certainly, my diagnosis and treatment would have been far more difficult. It is my firm belief that this agency has saved lives. I hope that the staff will continue to provide service to gender dysphoric people for many years to come. Their help is needed and appreciated.

Please feel free to circulate this letter.

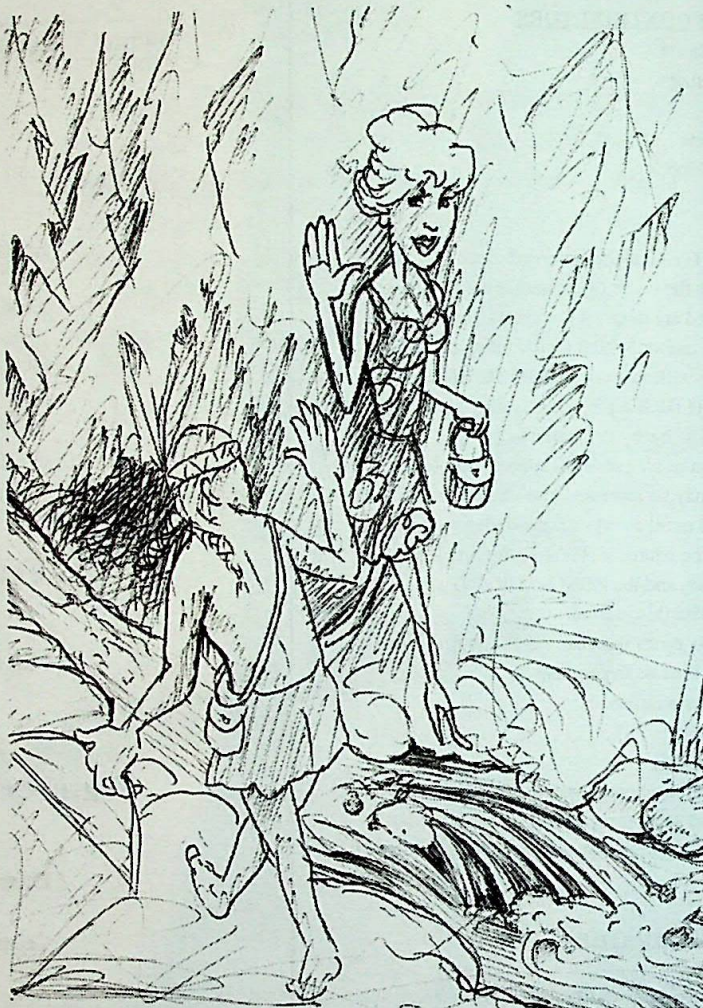
Thankyou again.

Yours Truly,
Joanne McCracken

*copies to: Janet Van Clabern, Ministry of Health,
Zenith Digest*

Dysphoria

by Melissa Tulloch



**Long before the arrival of the white man,
natives and transsexuals led a mutual existence.**

Stephanie Castle Heal
C/O Zenith Foundation

Dear Stephanie Castle -Heal:

I have finally caught up on my reading pile at the Commission and have learned via the Zenith Digest that you are cutting back on your involvement with Zenith.

I realize that this doesn't mean that you have left the organization or that you will stop your advocacy for and on behalf of transgendered persons. But I did want to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to you for all the work that you have done to advance the equality

rights of transgendered people, over these past 3 1/2 years while I have been Chief Commissioner of the BC Human Rights Commission. Your contributions have been enormous, not only in terms of advocacy for your community but also in terms of educating the general public on the discrimination faced by transgendered persons.

I hope that you will keep up the good work in whatever way you choose.

Yours sincerely,
Mary Woo Sims
Chief Commissioner

Gender Clinic Under Stress

Editorial

by Joanne McCracken



Try to imagine what it would be like if you had a medical condition that nobody understood. You suffered mental anguish from it on a daily basis, but your doctor did not understand it, and could not find any specialist to consult with. This was the way things were not too long ago. The "gender clinic" at Vancouver General Hospital has only been in existence since the mid 1980's. During that time, more than 600 people have come there seeking help with possible gender identity problems. Of that number about 100 have decided on gender transition and gender reassignment surgery. As far as I know, they have gone on to live successfully in their new gender. Of course, this does not mean that all their problems have melted away. Gender transition is a very tough choice to make and should not be taken lightly. Issues such as physical health, family, careers, education, and financial security will remain important. They may even become more of a problem than before, especially when it comes to employment. For these reasons and others, the psychiatrists and psychologists who work part of their time at the clinic are very cautious and conservative in diagnosing and making recommendations for transition.

Recently, certain persons have been very critical of their treatment by the clinic, even to the extent of sending threatening letters from lawyers. This has done little to improve the morale of clinic staff. It would be wise to remember that they are human beings and not

infallible, despite their medical and academic qualifications. It is the patient who must decide what to do and take responsibility for his/her actions. In the final analysis it is your body and you can choose what to do with it. As with any other medical specialists, you do not have to take their advice or recommendations - but you do have to live with your choices. If things don't work out, you have no one to blame but yourself.

Today the medical system is under stress and there is a high demand for all kinds of medical services. The health care professionals who work for the clinic would have no difficulty at all in finding other work if it ever dissolved. The losers would be the patients, who would then have to figure out how to get help entirely on their own. Gender dysphoria is a rare condition that many doctors never encounter in their entire careers. At the very least, the clinic concentrates those few people who have knowledge and experience. As with the services of any medical specialist, you can always get a second or third opinion. In fact, it is probably a good idea when considering something as drastic as gender transition.

Too often these days, we come to expect packaged solutions from the experts to all our

problems. But getting medical services for a condition such as gender identity disorder is not like getting a hamburger from Macdonald's. For example, if you are a big rugged looking guy, don't expect that you can be somehow magically transformed into a raving beauty. You may be lucky just to become passable, and that only after a lot of cosmetic surgery you will have to pay for from your own pocket. Then you have to ask yourself if you really want

to live a life where everyone you meet is going to wonder about which gender you are. Are you going to feel good about yourself? Maybe you will. In the end, it's your decision and you have to live with it.

"don't expect that you can be somehow magically transformed into a raving beauty"

It is said that those who choose to be their own lawyers have a fool for a client. I think this applies to medicine as well. The clinic may not be perfect, but it is a lot better than the alternative. Those who work there do so out of concern and interest in a rare condition. They are a caring group of people who can be hurt by criticism from those they have tried to help. Because of this, there is danger that the clinic may break down from internal, rather than external stresses. They may just throw up their hands and say "To hell with it," and go on to some other medical job. That would be a sad day indeed for transsexuals in BC. □

VICTORIA REPORT



Zenith Victoria has had a fun-filled summer.

We were planning a bar-b-q for our July meeting, but ended up with cool weather. So we had an "Indoor Beach Party" with a pot-luck dinner, and 11 people attending. Because of the lack of sun, we hung a large cardboard sunshine from a chandelier. Members got a chuckle from the sign "Nude Beach. No clothes beyond this point." Thankfully, nobody took it as "law" and behaved themselves. A great time was had by all, with a wonderful assortment of gourmet dishes. *Photo on page 19*

August was another fun-filled meeting. We got the business over with quite quickly, and sprung a great Surprise Housewarming Shower for Norma. Norma has recently moved out on her own, and was trying to start her new life with just the bare essentials. Now she has all the little extras to make a house a home. It was at this meeting that the group elected me as an "honorary transsexual - female to male". I am honored. Thanks group! I feel that I really fit in much better now.

Our September meeting will be just a regular support meeting, but with three new

members. Our group is growing, but has not suffered from growing pains at all. The Zenith website has directed these people to make that important phone call or e-mail.

Our October meeting will be held on October 21st. We are planning a Hallowe'en party, so everyone comes in costume. There will be games and prizes following the regular meeting. So dig out your favourite costume and come to the October meeting. See you there.

Audrey Scammell, Zenith Victoria

President's Notes

by Gayle Roberts



Address to Zenith Foundation Annual General Meeting September 23, 2000

First let me welcome everyone to Zenith's Annual General meeting for the year 2000. It is particularly pleasing to meet our continuing members again along with their "significant others". Our Annual General meeting is a time when we can meet with old friends and meet new people. It is also a time when your president is able to review the year's activities and the accomplishments of our members. Unfortunately for me, and I am sure for many of you, it is also a time when we must say a figurative "good bye" to those hard working directors who, for a variety of reasons, have decided not to seek re-election. But at the same time we can say a warm "hello" to those of you who will seek office and bring new energy to the Board.

Over the past twelve months your Directors have dedicated a good portion of their time and energy to the various activities of Zenith. I would like to thank the following Directors who will either continue as Directors into the second year of their term or will be seeking re-election for a further two-year term:

Jane Neil has been a Director now for two years and has agreed to stand for re-election. I would particularly like to thank Jane for the effort she has put into the new transgendered organization Trans Alliance Society. Jane has done much to help this organization to develop its by-laws and has ably represented Zenith on Trans Alliance's Board. Jane by nature is a quiet person. She is a person who thinks clearly about issues and whose opinions have been very valuable to Zenith. Personally, I hope she is re-elected and will again be the link between Zenith and Trans Alliance.

Angelika Doman is possibly our most energetic Director. She is cheerful, has a dry sense of humour and is always willing to take on new projects and responsibilities. She is our secretary and is without doubt the producer of the best minutes of any organization I have ever belonged to. She has a flare for adding small parenthetical comments to the minutes of our meetings which make reading the minutes rank up there with reading the Digest for sheer pleasure. She has recently taken on the role of maintaining all our membership files and is working on creating a comprehensive list of e-mail addresses of our members so we can better communicate with them. I am so glad Angelika is not leaving us.

The third person who will remain as a Director (in addition to me) is Joanne McCracken. As Joanne has said, it is very difficult to fill the shoes of Stephanie Castle as editor of the Digest. I believe Joanne has done it admirably. The publication and circulation of the Digest is probably Zenith's most important activity. Joanne



*"We owe them a vote of thanks for the efforts that they have put into Zenith on our behalf."
(directors who are stepping down.)*

has maintained the excellent standard that we have over the years come to expect. We should all be truly thankful to Joanne for the many hours she puts in as editor and for the quality production she has maintained. Thank you Joanne and thank you for staying on for at least another year.

The next group of Directors is those who for one reason or another have decided not to seek re-election. We owe them a vote of thanks for the efforts that they have put into Zenith on our behalf.

The first person I would like to mention is Tamara Sale, our vice-president. Amongst many contributions Tamara has made to Zenith, I would particularly like to recognize the work she has done in producing the Digest. Tamara has been our photojournalist and our lay out person. Tamara has demonstrated admirably how to put an issue of the Digest to bed. I know that Joanne has found Tamara's energy and knowledge invaluable. She will be sorely missed.

Another of our Directors who is stepping down is Sarah Wilson - our past president. We all owe Sarah a vote of thanks for her contributions over the past six years as a Director and in particular for the two years when she was our president. Sarah has contributed much to the Digest and has been an active member of our Publications Committee for several years. I would also like to thank Sarah for making it so much easier for me in my role as President. I have sought her advice on many issues and she has willingly given it. Thank you Sarah.

The next person I would like to recognize is our dear, lovable Stephanie Castle. Much has been said over the past twelve months about Stephanie's contributions to Zenith. All you have to do is read back issues of the Digest to see the contributions Stephanie has made and the bouquets that many have bestowed upon her. No single individual has contributed more to Zenith than Stephanie. She is a founding Director of Zenith, she is the past editor of the Digest, she has been an advocate on our behalf for many in the TS community - including some who have been or are presently in the prison system. Stephanie is the editor of "Guidelines" and a contributor of several of its articles. On almost any issue, Stephanie has been tireless in letter writing or meeting with students or employers to explain gender identity issues. Even though Stephanie is officially stepping down, I know she will continue to offer her sage advice - possibly as a support director.

The last person we must all thank is Pat Diwold. As you know, Pat is a support Director.

continued on page 16

continued from page one

to this. There was a chance that the operation last August, the details of which he is reluctant to divulge, would be sufficient to allow him to carry on outwardly Peter, but inwardly Carol. "It was marvelous, as Carol I felt closer to my true self. But I couldn't go on being two people. The operation I face is horrendous, and there are often complications. No one would go through it unless they were desperate."

Seeing him make our tea with skimmed milk, I ask if he is dieting so he will be able to fit into a size 12 dress. "The hormones have made me put on weight and I need as little body fat as possible for the operation," he says, smiling. "In the past few months, I have lost a stone and a half. Lent has its uses."

The days since Monday, when he sat next to the Bishop at a press conference, have been "surreal", he says. There have been dozens of calls and messages of goodwill - no hate mail - and his phone has not stopped ringing. In between, he has been carrying on with his daily work.

"I'm embarrassed even to say the words 'female hormone'." But the sense of release is evident. After years of being "tortured", he enjoys discussing practicalities with a member of the sex he is soon to join.

Peter is a sizeable man and he sits in masculine fashion, sticking his large feet out in front of him. "They're a size 10. I just want one more miracle - I want them to go down to size 8," he jokes. "But I'm sure He's got better things to do."

Carol, however, will be able to get shoes to fit from Marks & Spencer and through mail order; he knows, because he has been cross-dressing for years. "The first time I put on my wife's clothes it was explosive. I stood in front of the mirror and said: 'Where have you been all my life?'"

That was more than 20 years ago, before he was even ordained - and the realization sent him into a spiral of guilt. But recently, he has been told to attend appointments with his private doctors (he didn't dare seek treatment on the NHS for fear of exposure) as a woman. How on earth did he sneak out of the vicarage dressed like that? "Let me just say that I have avoided scandal. Nobody has turned round in the street and gasped in horror."

Peter Stone takes his work very seriously. Two days after the August operation, he had a wedding booked and officiated without revealing his acute discomfort. For the sake of his parishioners, too, he has begged a waiver of the normal requirement that any man seeking a sex change spends two years in women's clothes

before the operation. "I couldn't go to see the bereaved dressed as a woman," he says.

He has always been "meticulous" about taking off make-up, and he has kept his hair short, with just a soft curl over his forehead to indicate femininity. "I can't grow it long as a Territorial Army chaplain," he says. He has not yet heard whether he will be allowed to continue in that role, but he would like. When he becomes Carol, he will take three months off to recover and get used to his new self. "It sounds silly, but I have nothing to wear," he says. However, as far as possible, he will look like his old self. Dog collars are a boon because

they hide the A d a m ' s apple, and he will wear the dark s u i t s favoured by most women ministers.

But he will still have to get used to the public's

reaction to a woman with a deep voice and huge hands and feet. How will he react if a man makes a pass at him? "I don't know. It will be very strange. I haven't felt gay, and I have never moved in those circles. But who can say how things will change? I certainly am not doing this because I want to marry a man, as some have suggested. All I want is to be the person I have always felt myself to be.

"My earliest memories are of dreaming that

I was a girl. I never told my p a r e n t s because it seemed so natural. At school, I felt I was one of the girls and at Christmas, I wanted to be Cinderella in the panto-mime."

Whether his parents suspected his leanings, he doesn't know. But he does remember, with pain, the day when all his cuddly toys disappeared; his mother denies having thrown them away. "As an adult, I found I could go out and buy teddy bears and no one would take them away," he says, indicating the fluffy toys dotted around.

As a child, he read the Bible from cover to cover and found an injunction against men dressing as women. That stopped him borrowing his mother's clothes, but he prayed nightly to be turned into a girl. "Until I reached puberty. Then, with all those hormones surging, I asked God to take a rain check."

During the years when he was reading history at Leicester University and theology at Queens College, Cambridge, he continued to be interested in women and, at 21, he married for the first time, "for friendship and companionship".

Then the problems started. From the moment he saw himself in the mirror wearing his wife's clothes, he knew he had to do something. Remembering the words he had read in the Bible, he was agonized by guilt, terrified that he would never be ordained. He tried to repress his desire and "as part of a Christian marriage", he and his wife had a daughter.

Joy at fatherhood did not alter his feelings of being in the wrong body and, a year later, he applied for a sex change. "When I told my father he begged me in tears not to. Then my wife left me, and I knew that my daughter did not need two mummies: she needed a dad."

So he carried on as Peter and, a few years later, married again: "Of course I was explicit to my wife", he says, and despite the strain of his double life, the marriage lasted for 13 years. Then, in 1996, a few months after he arrived at the parish of Upper Stratton, near Swindon, his wife went home to America and never returned.

The following year, his father died. It was time to take action but, before he did so last year, he made sure his now 18-year-old daughter understood his position. "She has been great," he says. "She has seen me through each decision."

His ex-wives have supported him too. There remained only the letter to the bishop which he finally persuaded himself to write in January, knowing that the second, more major operation

had to be done within two years of the first.

Sleepless nights followed as he waited for a response. Within a week, it arrived. "Before I opened it, I hugged it to my chest and prayed," he says, laughing at himself for imagining that

God would alter the contents. Inside, he learnt that the bishop hoped to "stand by" him.

A month later, the Rt Rev Barry Rogerson entered Peter's study, sat in a low chair facing him and announced the verdict of the Archbishop of Canterbury. "There is no canonical bar to your ministry," he said. Peter's relief was overwhelming.

"I had assumed the worst. I knew nothing of the bishop except that he had supported the ordination of women."

There was one more hurdle. He needed a two-thirds majority of support in the Parochial

continued on page 8

"I'm embarrassed even to say the words 'female hormone'." But the sense of release is evident.

"I had assumed the worst. I knew nothing of the bishop except that he had supported the ordination of women."

Church Council to keep his job. Last Friday, they voted 17 to 1 in his favour; all that remained was to make their decision public.

"We do not always feel that our bodies fit us," the bishop told the St Philip's congregation last Sunday. "Some of us feel too fat or too thin. How would you feel if your body felt totally wrong?" He then explained Peter Stone's predicament. When he had finished, a member of the congregation stood up and said: "We loved him as Peter, and as Carol we will give him our full support." A round of applause followed.

Repeating those words now brings tears to Peter Stone's eyes. The future will be an extraordinary adventure, which he hopes to share with his parishioners. He has already begged them to tell him if he is "wearing an inappropriate shade of nail varnish".

Since then, alone in his study, he has been writing his editorial for the parish newsletter. "I don't want to make the mistake of thinking they are terribly interested in me," he says. So he has chosen a Breton sailor's prayer which reads: "Protect me Lord, my ship is tiny and your sea so vast." Writing about God's all-embracing mercy, he notes that, "in a marvelous way, you are suddenly no longer adrift." And leaves it at that. □



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Transgendered Employees Emerging as a Human Rights Issue

Continued from page one...

The provincial commission recently issued a statement on discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender identity, making clear that complaints will be taken seriously. The Canadian Human Rights Commission is also considering a recommendation from its national advisory panel that gender identity be added to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination.

The issue has not crossed the radar of most employers — or, indeed, the mainstream public — human rights officials concede. However, ignorance does not justify harassment, and cross-dressing at work is not a ground for dismissal, the commission says in its policy document, which takes anti-discrimination guidelines to a new frontier.

"Political correctness seems to stop at the doorstep of the transgendered," says one Toronto woman who reports that she has been shunned and denied employment because of her male-to-female transition. "People who wouldn't dream of discriminating against people of colour, people with disabilities or obese people think it is perfectly okay to discriminate against the transgendered," she says. We're such a visible target."

Cynthia Petersen, who represents a number of transgendered clients in her practice with Sack Goldblatt and Mitchell in Toronto, says that it is "very common, when people start to transition, that they get fired or harassed." The transgendered community is just now starting to fight back, she says. Ms. Petersen says she could not discuss details of workplace harassment cases she has been involved in. But, she adds, the strong policy adopted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, in response to complaints, is a helpful directive "in the sense that the law is evolving in this area."

In a landmark U.S. court decision two weeks ago, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. of Bentonville, Ark., was ordered to pay \$2-million (U.S.) to former cashier Ricky Bourdovales, who said she was harassed and fired after a boss learned she was undergoing a male-to-female sex change. Although she had received hormone treatments for several years, had breast implants and dressed as a woman, Wal-Mart insisted that the cashier use the men's washroom after she confided to a supervisor that she was in transition. She was mocked and called "he-she and it" in front of customers, according to news reports of the case. Wal-Mart is appealing

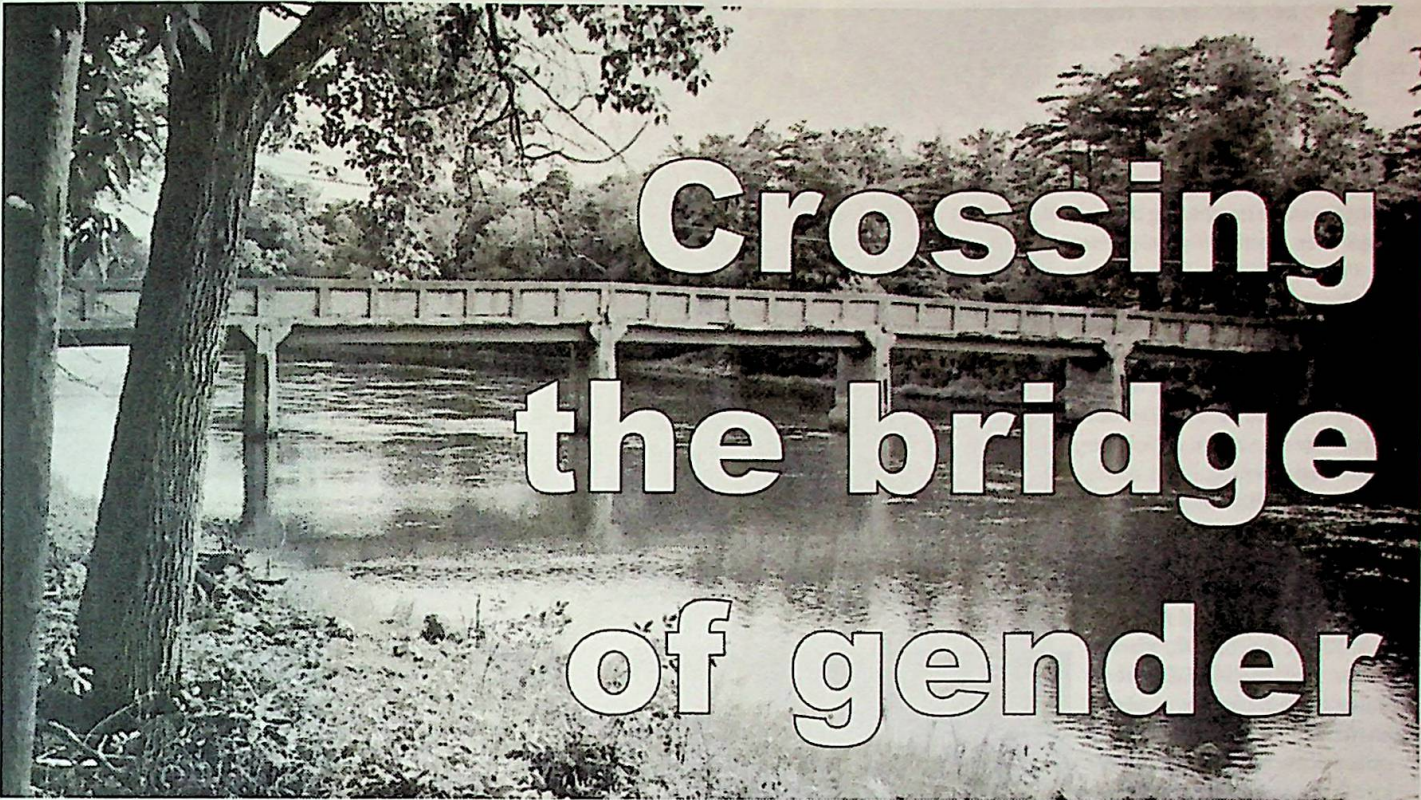
the award by a judge in New Brunswick, N.J., claiming the cashier was fired for just cause because of cash-register discrepancies.

Ms. Petersen says it is not unusual for employers to find a pretext for firing transgendered employees. She says that her clients cannot qualify for sex-reassignment surgery in Ontario until they have lived, worked and been identified as the opposite gender for at least two years. But the process of coming out often "creates havoc" with people's work lives she says. Surmountable problems, such as access to a washroom, are posed as major impediments.

The Ontario policy was written after the commission received a number of reports about "the severe marginalization and stigma experienced by transgendered people," the human rights body said in June, when it published its position. To assist those for whom transgendered issues are unfamiliar territory, the commission advises that the term transgendered refers to people "who are not comfortable with or who reject, in whole or in part, their birth-assigned gender identities." It includes transsexuals, cross-dressers and intersexed individuals [those born with full or partial sex organs of both genders], the commission says. "The personal characteristics that are associated with gender identity include self-image, physical and biological appearance, behaviour and conduct as they relate to gender. Gender identity is fundamentally different from a person's sexual orientation."

Transgendered people are extremely reluctant to go public with their problems because of the way they are regarded by society. However, the nature of complaints received by the commission made it clear that it was necessary to issue a powerful statement that transgendered people have "the right to equal treatment without discrimination," chief commissioner Keith Norton says.

"Misunderstanding of transgendered persons, combined with hostility toward their very existence, are fundamental human rights issues," he says. "As the organization charged with the administration and enforcement of the [Ontario Human Rights] Code, the commission has the responsibility to forward the policy that the dignity and worth of every person be recognized and that opportunities be provided without discrimination because of gender identity." □



Crossing the bridge of gender

Former Digest

Photo Chief

**Tamara Sale recently
travelled to Montreal
for SRS.**

**The DIGEST is pleased
to offer a four-page
account, in her own words,
of her experience and
her photographic
recording of her journey**

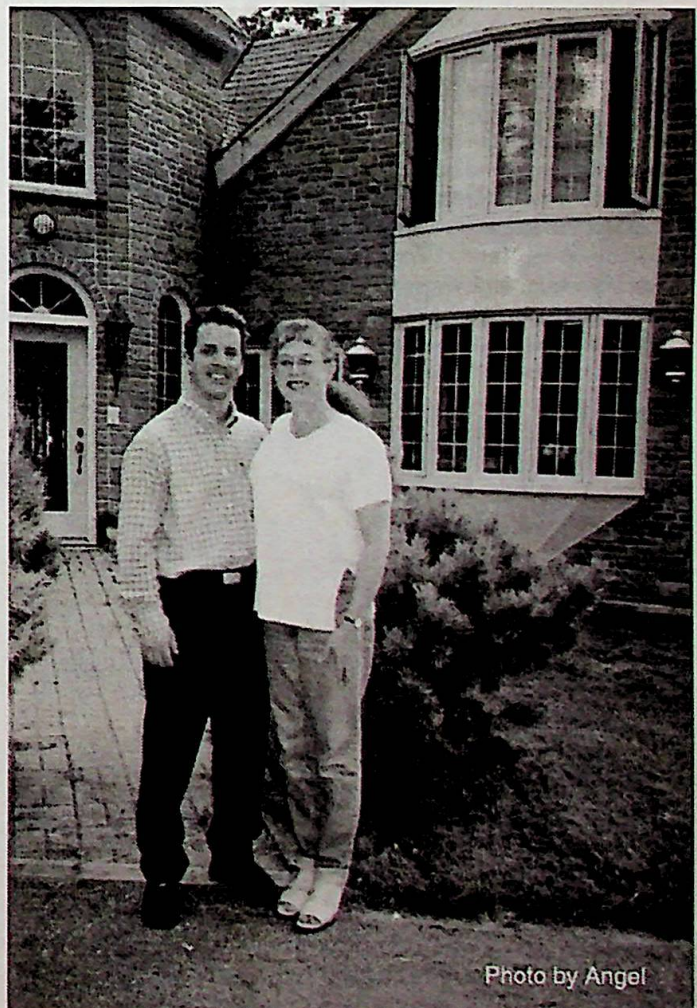


Photo by Angel

The call from Suzanne of Dr. Brassard's office of the Chirurgie Plastique in Montreal was direct and to the point. "We have a problem with the date of your SRS surgery on August 24."

My heart fell as my mind raced through thoughts of an impending delay of the surgery I had been waiting for so patiently.

"We would like instead to move you up one day to the 23rd in order to transfer you from the hospital to the recovery residence one day sooner. This will mean that you will check in to the hospital the day you arrive and you will meet Dr. Brassard only immediately before your operation the following morning."

Thus was the only glitch in what was to be the otherwise flawless experience of my long awaited culmination of my change from male to female.

I arrived at Dorval Airport at 5:00 pm August 22, where I was met by a uniformed Limo driver bearing a sign with my name. I was immediately put at ease knowing that the arrangements made through Suzanne were working.

Following a 40 minute drive in rush hour traffic, we arrived at La Maison de l'Île, the retreat on the private island where I would spend my post-surgical recovery. Upon arrival my roommate to be, Lynette Aster greeted me warmly. She had arrived a few hours earlier from Pennsylvania, and we were both to go directly to the hospital. We would become fast friends over the next 12 days.

After a cleansing enema and a bit of a cleanup, we were taken by cab to the hospital, arriving at about 7:30 PM.

Check-in was followed by another enema. We both settled in, playing a game of chess on the portable board Lynette had packed.

Our room was sparse, lacking a TV, but with individual safes for valuables. At about 10:30 PM a mothering-type nurse came around with a sleeping pill for each us. As Lynette would have her surgery first the next morning at 7:00 AM, we said our good-nights and I was soon asleep.

Next morning Dr. Brassard escorted me to his office where we discussed the procedures I had requested. I was to have an Adam's Apple shave and breast implants as well as SRS. I had thought I wanted a "C" cup, but wanted his advice as I didn't want to

10 September/October 2000



appear top-heavy. He assured me a "C" would be in keeping with my general build, and I felt confident his advice was honest and well informed. We discussed where the incision would be made - under the breast, around the areola, or in the armpit. His preference was for under the breast as, he said, this would provide him the best opportunity to correctly position the implant. I deferred to his expertise.

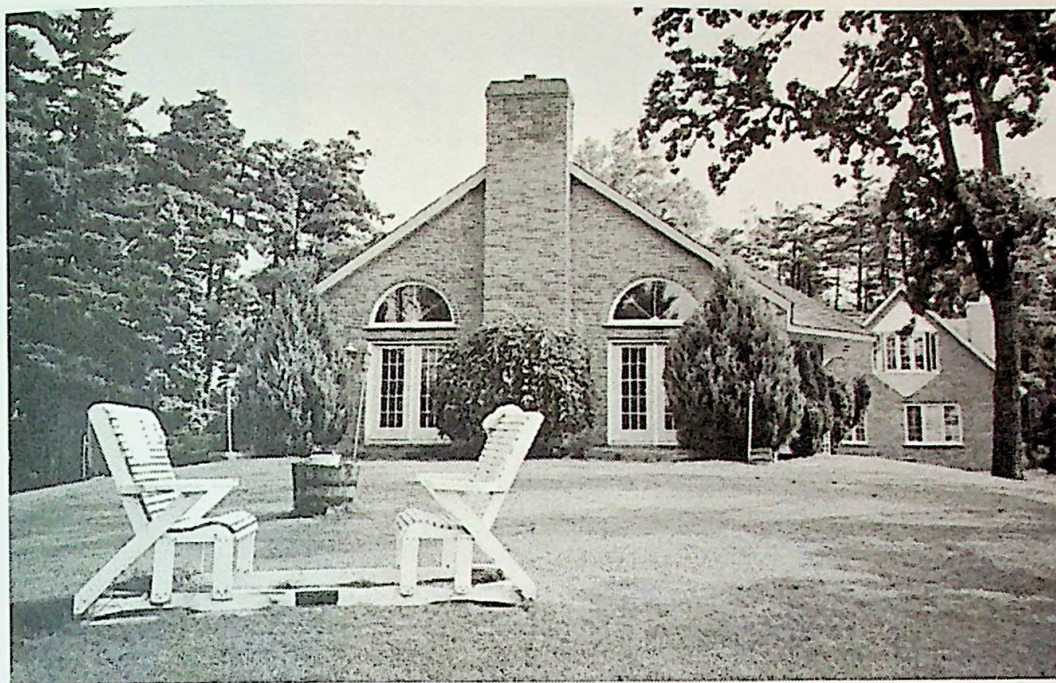
We then discussed the SRS procedure. Due to the small size of my penis caused by years of hormone use, I was sure I would need a skin graft for adequate vaginal depth. Brassard's technique though is to use the skin of the penis to create the external genitalia, and the scrotum skin to line the vagina. Only

if there is insufficient scrotal tissue will he use a graft. He also saves the urethra, normally discarded, and uses it to form the insides of the labia minora. Brassard uses a one step procedure creating the labia in the same procedure as the vaginoplasty. This saves both time and the discomfort of a second procedure sometimes done months later.

He uses the glans penis to form the clitoris, which is sensate due to the use of the associated nerve.

After our meeting, I returned to my room, where Lynette was ready to go to the O.R. I was left alone with my thoughts of my impending womanhood.

Shortly thereafter the anaesthetist came to



greet me and ask the usual round of questions designed to determine my general health, and possible side effects of anaesthesia. Once I had satisfied him that I was the picture of health, he bid me adieu and I rested quietly until a nurse arrived with the news that I was required in the O.R. She gave me a shot, then asked me to accompany her to the third floor, where the three operating rooms are. I was to rest on an anteroom bed for what seemed about twenty minutes until Dr. Brassard appeared in green surgical garb and wheeled me into the O.R. Once I had transferred onto the operating table, the anaesthetist began the I.V. drip while Brassard asked if I had any questions. I could think of only one. "What is the capital of North Dakota?" I asked. I remember laughter and the warm

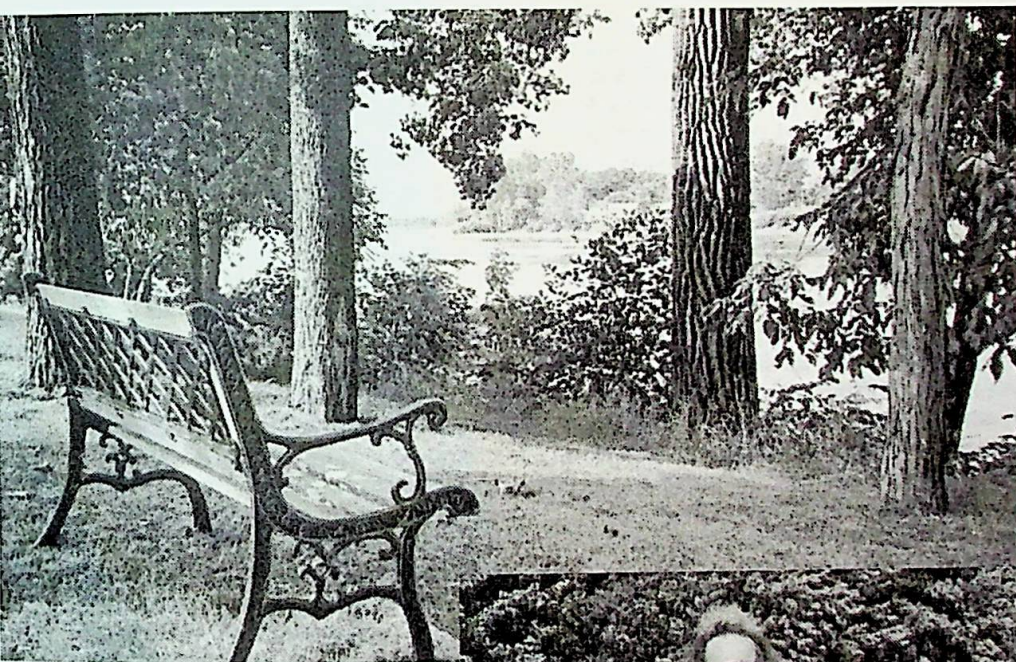
reassuring clasp of Dr. Brassard's hand as the veils of consciousness slipped away.

"It's over, you can wake now!"

I was back in my room, with a friendly nurse fussing over blankets and pillows. In the bed beside me was Lynette. "We did it, girl! We did it!" said Lynette, having recovered before I and was reading. I seem to remember giving her a "thumbs up" then drifting off again.

Our first meal was the following morning: dry cereal, toast, coffee or tea and V8 juice. As we had nothing to eat the previous day, we both wolfed down breakfast. Our appetites had returned intact! Over the next three days we were treated to a variety of semi warm chicken, soups, veggies, beef, Jello, rice

continued on next page



The facility just outside Montreal could easily be mistaken for a resort or a country estate. The grounds around the building and the surrounding country side offer the perfect place for a peaceful soul to enjoy serenity. Inside the facility is a luxurious swimming pool. Woman at right is Lynette Aster, my bud. Pictured with me on first page is Dr. Pierre Brassard.





Lynette and I pose and wait for timer to do its thing. Later Lynette enjoys the comfort of Tchaikovsky Room.

from previous page

pudding, and rolls. Each day a dietitian would take our orders for meals from the varied but bland menus. Lynette and I would exchange ideas on the possible location of the kitchen: down the street, next door, next block, etc., as we graded the warmth of the current offering.

Two days after surgery we were allowed out of bed. We were on catheters, which were disconnected from the bedside bag when we were up. Our bathroom was just a few feet from our

room and consisted of a bathtub with shower, sink and toilet. Our ventures from our room with our stents in place were hardly excursions, but at least we were up!

At night, we were confined to bed as our catheters were reconnected to the bedside bag.

Saturday August 26 was the day we left hospital and transferred to the residence - La Maison de l'Île. Dr. Menard took five of us in his van for the half hour drive. The ride was rather uncomfortable, for we all had stents and catheters still in place. Upon arrival we were shown our rooms. Lynette and I had the Tchaikovsky room on the second floor, with a small balcony overlooking the pool.

The room was wonderful, with sloping ceilings, hardwood floors, fireplace, TV, comfy twin beds, and a washroom worthy of a five star hotel, with twin sinks, twin showers and toilet all in an open plan but with the glass shower stall carefully positioned to ensure privacy.

Exhausted, we both flopped down on our beds and rested until dinner.

The meals at the residence were a pleasant contrast to the mediocre offerings at the hospital. Served in the dining room by the staff, the food

was varied, tasty, ample and hot. There was a variety of juices including prune, just to keep things moving. Conversation at the table was lively, and the atmosphere was most cordial.

In all there were about 14 of us in various stages of recovery at the residence. For a time I was the only Canadian. Brassard's low fee and the Canadian dollar make Montreal a very attractive destination for Americans seeking SRS or other plastic surgery.

Time spent at the residence seemed to revolve around three activities: dilating, resting and eating. About once a day Lynette and I would get ambitious and venture out for a walk to the local convenience store, the Boni Soir. We needed the activity, plus a diversion from the considerable discomfort following surgery. The store was on the mainland, and the journey to it involved crossing two bridges along the roughly 1/8 mile walk. By the time we would get back, we would be ready for a nap, our next dilation, or both.

My stay at the residence passed quickly, and soon it was time to say goodbye to new friends and staff. My SRS experience in Montreal is one I'll fondly remember the rest of my life.



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Slices of different lives prove illuminating

This side of the fence

by Jenny Mars



Under the headline "Sexchange pilot to keep flying" comes the latest T-story from the world of the military. It seems that Flight Lt. Eric Cookson, of her majesty's Royal Air Force, is not only now known as Flight Lt. Caroline Paige, but is on her way to reinstatement as a helicopter navigator as soon as she recovers from surgery. That a Persian Gulf veteran should surface as a closet female will be no surprise to anyone who keeps an eye open for trans-oriented stories in the press. A basic tenet of gender dysphoria studies is that a shocking number of people risk life and limb in the armed forces in a misguided attempt to open their eyes to the joys of manhood.

What is more intriguing is the slowly emerging truth that in Canada and Britain, at least, the armed services are also becoming a bastion of transsexual rights. Because of gradually enlightening attitudes of doctors and because the medical entitlements of servicemen and women tend to be so broadly defined, military authorities have found themselves no longer able to discharge emergent T-soldiers as "unfit for service."

These days, when an army psychiatrist reports to his commanding officer that Corporal Jones has been diagnosed as transsexual and has applied for reassignment surgery, the matter is virtually out of the CO's hands. Anyone attempting to prevent Jones's

access to medical treatment is looking for trouble.

Still, if it takes fortitude to come out as a TS in civilian life, it must take appreciably more to do so in the services. If there was ever an environment in which the average soul would not wish to divulge his cross-gender proclivities, the armed forces are probably it. So it comes as a rather delightful irony that these enclaves of testosterone-driven behaviour are becoming sanctuaries of tolerance for the gender divergent. (Flight Lt. Paige even reports that her colleagues "have been very supportive and loyal.")

Now, if only provincial health plans across Canada, not to mention Britain's NHS and America's private health insurers, could be compelled to get on board...

A while ago, I was invited to return as a contract worker to the same specialty workshop I had left in the late eighties. Only two of the staff, including the boss, knew me in Life 1, and things have gone rather swimmingly since my reappearance. Well, almost. When our office manager departed without notice a few weeks back, and shortly before said boss's vacation, it amounted to something of an emergency. Our leader called me to the office: could I, with no detectable secretarial or office management

experience or skills, possibly take over as secretary and office manager until he returned and got around to hiring a genuine replacement. As the only employee with a significant level of estrogen, I had to wonder at my selection, but the boss insisted that I was the only one he felt was capable of absorbing one week of on-the-job training and not subsequently running the company into the ground in his absence. Plus, if I didn't take the job, I'd be laid off for lack of work, anyway.

What is alarming is how easily everyone come to accept me in my new role. I am handed letters to type, timesheets to process, bills to spreadsheet (is that a verb?), sundry papers to sort and file and no one but me sees anything strange about this arrangement. What is eye-opening is the number of intricate procedures with which one must be familiar to handle a job that normally pays two-thirds of my regular wage. (My boss had the good graces to peg my rate somewhere between the two.) I realize that this observation will bring smiles and delight to any bio women who happen to be reading this, but what can I say? My eyes have been opened to the lowly trials of office work, and I am resolved to encourage young women to set their sights on more specialized skills that garner more appreciation and remuneration.

So there. □

Health Board - continued from page 1

"There are many diverse roles, cultures and human circumstances that characterize Vancouver and Richmond and these oblige us to respond to diversity with regard and respect," she said.

The Framework will guide policies, procedures and initiatives in three areas: Diversity in health care delivery - intended to ensure, "the concepts of diversity will be integrated into all facets of health service delivery." Human rights - intended to ensure, "the right to a work and service environment that is free of discrimination and harassment." Employment Equity - intended to ensure, "employment practices are free from bias in recruitment, training and promotional opportunities."

In addition to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, the other four groups include women, aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities and persons belonging to visible minorities.

"Research has shown that these groups have experienced persistent patterns of employment disadvantage due to discrimination," said Pearson, who is also Chair of the health board's Human

Resources and Health Policy Committee. "The inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in the employment equity category puts the V/RHB at the leading-edge of policy in this area," she said.

"They should not have to experience barriers to employment due to systemic discrimination," said Pearson. "Employment equity means creating a workforce that represents the diverse population it serves. She added, "It is a climate in which no one is denied employment or advancement opportunities for reasons unrelated to a person's ability to do the job." Pearson pointed to some of the steps the health board has taken to address diversity including: (1) Establishing Population Health Advisory Committees for aboriginal, children and youth; people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; mental health; multicultural; seniors; and women

(2) Developing a board policy around diversity and employment equity

(3) Creating long-standing programs and services such as the Multicultural Health Education Program, translated health education resources and pre-natal classes in different languages.

The Framework for Diversity is the result of four-year process of research, deliberations, and consultation with the region's unions, community representatives, and management, led by the board's Human Resources and Health Policy Committee. Established in 1996, the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board promotes and provides for the physical, mental and social well-being of people who live in the Vancouver/Richmond region, and all those who receive health services within Vancouver and Richmond. The health board is responsible for funding and coordinating health care service delivery including hospitals, continuing care services, mental health services and public health. □

Small Attendance at 2000 AGM



The meeting started with only 14 members present. Business took about an hour, and the rest of the time was spent socializing.



Rhonda and Angelika smile for the camera.



Stephanie and new board member Leslie Stephens



I wonder what Sarah and Christine were talking about, Gayle's spiffy new satin blouse perhaps?



Tamara Dukai tells of her adventures with laser hair removal. Christine plans a comparative study.

Commentary

by Stephanie Castle



Contrary to some opinions held by transsexuals, it is not the end of the world if one does not pass perfectly. In fact if the truth be recognized only a very few of us qualify for a 100 per cent pass mark. The reasons are obvious to anyone with any degree of perception in their view of the sisterhood.

Every so often I have been checked by another t/s person who wonders why I haven't coloured my hair or allowed my nails to grow long or some such thing usually based on their own standards as they apply them to themselves. My ridiculously fine hair won't perm in a satisfactory way and I refuse to destroy it with chemical dyes or bleaches. In spite of what others might think my presence as a trans-woman is not diminished one iota as I see myself and that's what counts.

I well remember some ten years ago when my surgery was not far off, sitting in a drop-in meeting at the hospital clinic discussing individual interests. When I explained that I had had a life long interest in ships and the sea as strong as any love affair, that I had been to sea, had been in ship management, made ship models, had for years owned sailboats and wrote journalistic pieces about them I was taken to task by one of those present for not being a "true" transsexual because I still held to these masculine interests. I was told that I should take a greater interest in feminine things and seek work as a woman (ignoring the fact that I was on the brink of retirement), if I wanted to succeed with my gender change. What a load of horse manure that advice turned out to be. In truth my feminine instincts and appreciation of the feminine had been present all along and grew in a way that suited me best, which is what counts.

Despite all the diversion in one's life brought about by dealing with gender dysphoria there still remains a lot of room for my interests and hobbies. The individual concerned has never gone through with her gender change surgery and in fact may never do so. She has suffered depression and has been near suicide and so far as I know is not in touch with the clinic any longer. As for myself my particular interest in matters maritime has not diminished and nor has that of several other t/s persons I know who have parallel interests in racing cars, railways and airplanes, full size and model. In truth there is no such thing as a stereotypical transsexual, even though there are symptoms of the condition that are more or less common to all.

Why this slavish nonsense that everyone must fit the same image? We all come into this life with our own distinguishing features which govern our development in becoming the different people we all develop into. Most of us learn to find our own checks and balances which enable us to lead a

normalized life according to our own personal needs. What we choose to define as a normalized life is entirely up to each of us as individuals and beyond that it is no one else's business as to how we handle our own affairs.

Whatever we do it is important for the sake of our mental health and wellbeing to remain objective and to stay active in whatever field we choose to function. If we choose an ultra feminine role there is nothing wrong with that and I do not condemn it in any way. Equally those of us who follow a more masculine path, at least in our activities, should not be condemned either. And on top of all that masculine activities are more and more being pursued by women so that exclusively masculine endeavours are no longer the preserves of males alone.

We are told that there is strength in the community's diversity and this is evidence of it.

Quite some time back we told the story of Alexandra Michaldiko, a Russian transsexual living in the city of Bryansk. She had her surgery in Kharkov, a large city in the Ukraine not too far, in Russian terms, from Stalingrad of Second World War fame. The operation succeeded to the extent that her male genitals were removed but what she got in return was something a good deal less than satisfactory by way of a vagina.

A recent letter relayed to us by Australian member, Elaine Foster, tells a long and at times, harrowing story of Alexandra's adventures or misadventures since that time. Despite far greater freedom within Russian society, one evidently still needs a passport to travel around within Russia, so that the familiar scene portrayed in movies of the Russian policeman or military demanding "Your papers, please" still goes on. Having been pickled in bureaucracy for centuries it is difficult to shake off its cloying substitute for freedom and so many things we take for granted are still the stuff of dreams for the average Russian.

Alexandra and her family are lucky, for they live in a country area where they have a substantial garden and are able to grow a considerable part of their diet in the way of fresh vegetables and fruit. In that sense they have it better than a great many of their fellow Russians.

However, some of her problems are typical. Father regards her as a castrated son, although mother does try to give her some help. Her 34-year-old brother died last year from acute alcoholism which evidently is a huge killer of young men some of whom have had much difficulty in adjusting to life after Afghanistan and Chechnya. He hated her for being transsexual and perhaps missing many male obligations. Her English is a little confused at times, but it is not

hard to understand. She is trying to raise about \$150 US (say \$250 Canadian) to cover expenses leading to, she hopes, a job, presumably as a stewardess or something on a foreign ship where she figures she can make a decent wage and put the money together to cover the cost of remedial surgery in Moscow. As we all know many Russians are working outside the country from hockey players to "hostesses" and are sending their hard currency earnings back home.

Advancing money to assist foreigners is beyond the mandate of Zenith, but if anyone would like to help with any amount of money, from a five dollar bill upwards. Write to me and I will give you more details. Any money contributed would have to be handled through me, personally. I would hold it in a special account - cheques payable to Stephanie Heal, in trust and the cheque notated on front or back - Alexandra Michaldiko Fund. With enough in hand I would simply convert it to U.S. dollars and send it to her by a banker's draft. These people need our help and having heard from Alexandra indirectly through Elaine Foster, I consider her open and unvarnished approach to her life and its problems to be honest. Elaine incidentally, is contributing \$50 Australian and I will add a like amount in Canadian money.

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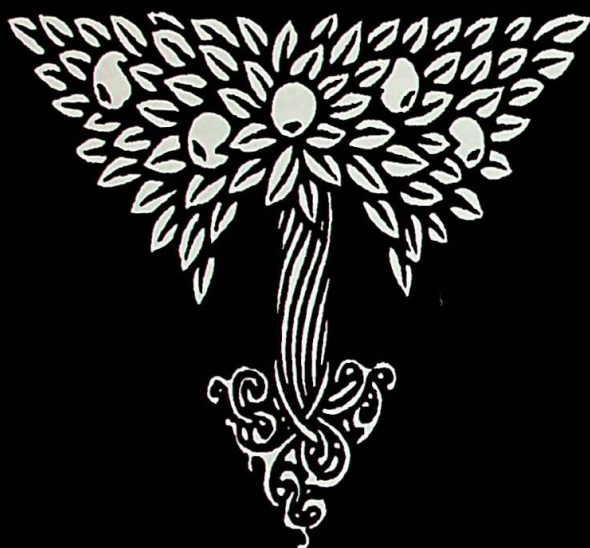


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President's Notes - continued from page 6

She is also one of the psychologists at the Gender Clinic. I don't know of any other professional who has voluntarily stepped outside of her professional role to help the very people she counsels. I first met Pat when I was in need of support and counseling as I wrestled with my own gender dysphoria. Pat has that special skill that enabled me to reach aspects of myself that I didn't even know existed. Now that I have come to terms with my gender identity, I have come to regard Pat as a very good friend. Pat has served two very important roles in Zenith over many years - membership director and treasurer - roles that have been done excellently. If you think of all the social functions you have attended, you will have noted that Pat is one of the first to arrive, one of the last to leave and always has her sleeves rolled up. Pat has epitomized what it means to be a volunteer. No one could ask for a better role model.

In addition to your Directors, there are a number of individuals we must recognize for their contributions to the Digest. They are Stephanie Castle, Joanne McCracken, Sarah Wilson, Jenny Mars, Christine Burnham, Angelika Dohman, Roz Shakespeare, Linda Fraser and Petra Cummings. Thank you all. Without your contributions, the Digest would not be the quality production it is today. Roz Shakespeare and Audrey Scammel (and of course Stephanie again) also deserve our thanks for hosting our support groups. Many individuals who are on the waiting list to get into the Gender Clinic have found these groups a real life-line.

Now I would like to review some of the more important accomplishments of Zenith during the past year. Without doubt the number one accomplishment is the continued quality production of the Digest. This is the one item that our members and the general public see. The Digest plays an important role in projecting a positive image of transsexual individuals.

Another important activity was the meetings held between myself and separately some other members of Zenith and Kathleen Cross who was reviewing the question of including "gender identity" into the BC Human Rights Code. Through those meetings, it is my hope that "gender identity" will become another protected category in the Code.

Maintaining positive connections with the Gender Clinic has also been very important. This has been accomplished by Pat Diwold on an ongoing basis and also in particular by Sarah Wilson, Joanne McCracken and myself with meetings with Dr. Stevenson, the head of the Clinic.

The re-building of the Victoria Chapter of Zenith by Audrey Scammel has also been particularly important. The Victoria Chapter is extremely valuable to our transsexual members on the Island. Audrey must also be thanked for representing Zenith at a number of meetings in Victoria with Provincial officials.

Another accomplishment is the start of the e-mail list of addresses of our members. Through this list we will be able to communicate better with our members.

Finally, I would like to mention the Trans Alliance Society. As you know Zenith's focus is support and advocacy for transsexuals and education in the broadest sense of the word regarding transsexual issues. This emphasis will continue. Trans Alliance has a much wider focus: the transgendered community. Zenith decided to become a member of Trans Alliance because we recognize the need for an organization that serves a wider group of individuals. We hope that Trans Alliance, as a fledgling organization, will be successful. Zenith will, I hope, continue to play an active role in Trans Alliance by supporting the organization with representation from one of our Director's (Jane, I hope) and any other of our members who wish to sit on their Board.

Thank you for your patience with rather a long speech. I look forward to working for at least one more year with our new Board of Directors. -
Gayle Roberts

Back East

by Petra Cummings



Quebec Government Still Giving Problems for Name Changes

Despite a ruling earlier in the year from the Quebec Court of Appeals, it is still difficult for transsexuals in Quebec to change their names to match their gender. Case in point is Micheline Montreuil, who has been trying to change her name for a few years.

A pre-op transsexual, she has been trying to no avail to change her name. She took the Province to court and won the right for transsexuals to change their names to fit their gender role. Previously the Quebec government has stated that only those who had already undergone reassignment surgery could change their name.

This practice poses many problems for transsexuals. First, appearing as female and being called by a male name when going to the doctors is a big problem. Applying for a job in one gender and having to explain why the name on your social insurance number or drivers license is that of the other. Even purchasing something at a store using a credit card can be a hassle, the clerk might think you are using someone else's card and trying to rip them off. All of these examples end up in a common theme: having to explain why the name is different than that which is presenting.

The humiliating experiences

that the Quebec government forces Quebec transsexuals to endure equates to cruel and unusual punishment. This adds to a person's depression and frustrates the person to no end. Going through these experiences just because you need to change your name can even be debilitating. A transsexual may end up becoming a total shut in, afraid to go anywhere that requires presenting a form of identification. Suicide may even be a result.

Micheline will be attempting to change her name for a third time in October. Even with the appeals court decision to back her up, the solicitor can arbitrarily refuse to change a person's name. The solicitor has more power than is required in all reality. It is even hard to change a French first name to an English one in Quebec. People have been refused in the past. The

government's position: they want to protect the French culture.

Let's hope that Micheline is successful. Being born in Quebec myself, I am awaiting with great anticipation the result, because in order to have my name fully changed I need this done on my Quebec birth certificate and certificate of Baptism.

"It is even hard to change a French first name to an English one in Quebec."

Law, a Trinity Award winner, and is broadcast every Wednesday from 6:00 - 6:30. The show deals with GLBT issues, with a heavy emphasis on Transgender.

There are usually guests from within the community to discuss local and national issues. Joanne is attempting to get a longer time spot, as 30 minutes is just not enough.

Transgender Radio Alive and Well in Ottawa (Well, Sort of...)

Transsexuals and the rest of the Transgender community have quite a voice in the Capital region. This is in the form of community radio.

At present there are 3 radio stations with shows dealing with TS/TG issues. *Joanne's Closet*, on CKCU radio from Carleton University, *Definitely Not Straight Radio*, on CHUO radio from the University of Ottawa, and a new French language show (unfortunately the name and station eludes me at

this point).

Joanne's Closet is hosted by Joanne

Definitely Not Straight Radio is broadcast every Monday from 6:00 to 7:00 pm and was hosted by Remi-Serge Gratton. At present he has quit the job, and a new host is needed. I am one of the applicants, as I have my own Transgender Edition on the first Monday of the month. There are usually guests invited to discuss issues much like *Joanne's Closet*. I will keep you posted as to whether or not I get the job of hostess.

The French language show is new, only arriving this summer. It is my understanding that transgender issues are discussed quite frequently. Having a French language show in the region helps to include more of the community, not just English.

That's all for now, it's been relatively quiet in this part of the country since Pride finished. As more happens I will be sure to let you all know what's happening! □

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NEWS BRIEFS

AG's MINISTRY HIRES CONSULTANT TO LOOK INTO TRANS ISSUES

[Vancouver: Aug 00]

Kathi Cross, of Thetis Consulting Services, has been hired to carry out an informal investigation into trans issues as they pertain to the BC government.

The Attorney General's Ministry has asked Cross to report back with her findings before the end of the summer. Her mandate ranges from human rights to health services issues.

Cross began her consultation process by doing a through search of written reports and articles, followed by a diverse range of interviews.

To date, she has spoken to a wide assortment of representatives from F-M and M-F transsexuals, women's organizations, the legal profession, the Gender Clinic. Time permitting, she hopes to talk to people from the cross-dressing community, too.

Feedback from many of those trans and trans-allies Cross has spoken to so far, is that she seems to be approaching the project respectfully and that they believe she has demonstrated a through understanding of the issues.

Cross is working out the Human Rights Commission's offices for the summer. She has extended an invitation to those wishing to contact her, to do so (604-660-1764).

Cross said, "I expect to be making some kind of oral report to the Attorney General by the end of the summer.

"I'm sure you can appreciate that sometimes its worse to raise expectations higher than this contract may indicate than to expect modest results and be pleasantly surprised!

"My hope is that they go forward with some kind of initiatives but I can't really say what they will be at this point."

Source: Christine Burnham, TAS
Information Officer

GENDER RULED LEGITIMATE CAUSE FOR GRANTING ASYLUM

[Los Angeles: 25 Aug 00]

In a unanimous decision, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled yesterday that Mexican native Geovanni Hernandez-Montiel, 21, be granted asylum in the US because he faced persecution in Mexico due to his effeminate appearance.

This decision overrules a US Board of Immigration Appeals finding that rejected Hernandez-Montiel's request for asylum. The Board had denied his petition for asylum claiming that he could have avoided persecution by changing his appearance.

The Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund reports that Geovanni was thrown out of school in Mexico and forced to attend a program to change his sexual identity. Because of his effeminacy he suffered repeated harassment, beatings, and was gang-raped twice by Mexican police officers. He fled Mexico in October 1993.

Said Lambda attorney Jon Davidson, "In Mexico, if a man has an effeminate appearance, voice, or mannerisms, everyone considers him gay. The government cannot ask someone like Hernandez-Montiel to change his appearance, habits, voice, and mannerisms so that people do not associate his appearance with his sexual orientation."

Writing for the 3-judge 9th Circuit Court, Justice A. Tashima said, "[Geovanni's] female sexual identity is immutable because it is inherent in his identity; in any event, he should not be required to change it. Because the evidence compels the conclusion that he suffered past persecution and has a well-founded fear of future persecution if he were forced to return to Mexico, we conclude that the record compels a finding that he is entitled to asylum.

Source: The Gender Public Advocacy
Coalition, Inc. (GenderPAC)

AP REVISES STYLEBOOK REFERENCES TO GAY AND TRANSGENDERED

[New York, NY: 7 Aug 00]

As a result of meetings with GLAAD and GenderPAC, the Associated Press (AP) has revised its stylebook regarding references to gay and transgender people. The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law is considered the standard for proper news reporting and terminology usage.

The previous edition recommended different proper names and personal pronouns usage when referring to transgender people based on whether or not they were post-operative.

In the new edition, wording for 'sex changes' is: 'Use the pronoun preferred by the individuals who have acquired the physical characteristics (by hormone therapy, body modification, or surgery) of the opposite sex and present themselves in a way that does not correspond with their sex at birth. If that preference is not expressed, use the pronoun consistent with the way the individuals live publicly.'

'Gay' in the old edition: 'gay: acceptable as popular synonym for homosexual (n. and adj.).' In the new edition: 'gay: acceptable as popular synonym for both male and female homosexuals (n. and adj.), although it is generally associated with males, while lesbian is the more common term for female homosexuals. Avoid references to gay, homosexual, or alternative 'lifestyle.'"

Source: GenderPAC News,
www.gpac.org

Zenith Digest welcomes your comments on transsexual issues and appreciates any feedback you may have on the contents of this publication. Address your submissions to "Letters to the editor" and mail to Box 45006 - 4326 Dunbar St. Vancouver, BC, V6S 2G3, or email to zenithfoundation@hotmail.com

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“Beach Party” Held by Victoria Chapter



The weather outside was frightful, but the party was delightful

Gayle Roberts Celebrates The 'Big 60'



More than 50 friends and relatives held a surprise birthday party for our president at a Tsawassen home recently. "Never realized I had so many friends," she said. (somewhat tearfully)

Zenith Foundation services, pamphlets

SUPPORT GROUPS

All groups meet twice monthly.
For information contact the group leader.
Open only to members of the Zenith Foundation or their families, otherwise by invitation of the group leader

VICTORIA/SOUTH VANCOUVER ISLAND

Audrey Scammell
Tel: (250) 598-9711
E-mail: sivraj@netcome.ca

SURREY/NEW WESTMINSTER/LANGLEY

Contact Roz Shakespeare 604-501-2106

VANCOUVER/NORTH SHORE/BURNABY

Contact Stephanie Castle
604-261-1695

PARENTS GROUP - VANCOUVER and vicinity

Contact Dick Doerksen
604-681-7616

PAMPHLETS

Zenith Pamphlets are available free from Richmond Book. Send us your request with a self-addressed stamped No. 10 envelope

- 1 About the Zenith Foundation
- 2 About Gender Dysphoria
- 3 It's a Matter of Common Courtesy: Gender Dysphoria in the Workplace
- 4 Zenith Support Groups and Associated Activities
- 5 Transsexual Children and Youth
- 6 The Children of Transsexuals & Gender Dysphoria in the Parent
- 7 Writers Guidelines for the ZENITH DIGEST

ZENITH FOUNDATION/ZENITH DIGEST

Box 45006, 4326 Dunbar Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6S 2G3
<http://www.genderweb.org/~zenith>
email: zenithfoundation@hotmail.com
Tel: (604) 685-4335
Fax: (604) 266-4469

ANNUAL CHISTMAS PARTY

The Zenith Foundation annual Christmas party will be held at the Unitarian Church Hall, West 49th and Oak, Vancouver. This will be catered by Zenith with a traditional Christmas dinner. All food will be provided by Zenith, but if you want to bring a small item such as savory salad, shortcakes, cheese, fruit, chocolates or after dinner mints, that's okay too, but please, no big items.

Saturday Dec 9th, 2000

1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

\$10.00 per person.

Reservations necessary

Leave message at 604 685 4335

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head office (604) 944-6293 or call 688-WEST ext. 2065 for recorded drop-in updates

e-mail: youthquest@mail.org

web: www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/9992

Address Changed?

If you have moved please advise us of your new address.

If we do not have your new address, you will not get your copy of the DIGEST.

Our members are important to us and we are told by many that the DIGEST is important to you.

IT'S UP TO YOU - PUT US ON OUR LIST OF PEOPLE TO NOTIFY WHEN YOU CHANGE OUR ADDRESS.